

Beales Corner Flood Risk Management Scheme (FRMS) - Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Please note the questions and answers are regularly updated.

Please look at the date displayed at the top of each page to confirm you have the latest version.

1. Why are you doing the scheme?

Bewdley is subject to significant flood risk from the River Severn and has flooded several times. During the most recent events (2020, 2021 and 2022) some homes and businesses were flooded. These flood events impact on people's homes, businesses, and the local economy. Transport links and commuter routes through the town are also affected.

Over the years, various technical assessments have taken place to explore the possibility of a flood defence scheme at Beales Corner in Bewdley.

Unfortunately, a Flood Risk Management Scheme was not viable previously.

To date, measures, such as the temporary flood barriers and Property Level Resilience measures (for example flood gates, pumps and air brick covers for individual properties) have reduced the impact of flooding. Each of those solutions came with its limitations.

After the flooding in 2020, more funding was made available from Government for flood schemes nationally and there was an update to the rules for funding. This allowed us to revisit options for a permanent Flood Risk Management Scheme for the area and the change in the rules has allowed us to identify a scheme.

2. What are the main objectives of the scheme design?

The objectives of the scheme are:

- Develop a scheme that is as passive as possible to minimise operational risks for the community and our staff and high maintenance requirements.
- Mirror the Standard of Protection received by Bewdley right bank scheme to offer a consistent standard of service on both sides of the river (this also ensures the consistent flood warning service for a whole town)
- Maintain traffic flows through the town allowing residents and local businesses to continue as normal by keeping Bewdley Bridge open whilst the scheme is operational

We have worked hard to make sure all these objectives are met, which means that the scheme will not just benefit the properties affected by flooding, but the wider community and economy of Bewdley.

Current progress

3. What are the key activities and milestones over coming months?

The key upcoming activities are:

- Public Engagement drop in event on 27 June, 2023
- Discharging planning conditions
- Contractor setting up the site compound – summer 2023
- Main construction phase – late summer 2023
- Ongoing Continuation of delivery of the utility alterations – summer 2023

4. Will there be more engagement with the community as the scheme progresses?

Yes, we are working closely with the community and key stakeholders to engage with you throughout the project.

There will be a public drop-in event on 27 June 2023 at St Georges Hall, Bewdley, from 12pm – 7pm.

We will continue to seek your views and share more detailed information about the scheme at the following key stages:

- Prior to starting construction on site
- During construction

We take all views shared with us on board.

These will be considered alongside other aspects, such as heritage, engineering, budgetary, long-term maintenance, and landowner constraints.

Throughout the project, we have been engaging with you in a variety of ways; through virtual (Microsoft Teams) and face to face meetings, virtual and face to face drop-in sessions, E-newsletters, door knocks and site visits to the areas affected, letter drops and through our website.

We have asked local groups and community venues to display and share information about the scheme with their communities.

Design

5. Is the design finalised?

The scheme is finalised, and it is likely there will be no major changes made to the height and alignment of the defences. The scheme consists of raised ground, flood gates, demountable defences, and a variety of flood walls.

We have taken on board comments from residents, partners, and other stakeholders as part of the final design.

6. What will the height of the wall be?

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The finished top level of the defence will be a constant level, roughly the same as the opposite bank. The height of it will vary dependent on ground level, which varies along the line of the defences. The lowest walls will be 1 meter, and this goes up to 2.3 meter where the ground levels are lowest.

As part of our design approach, we have developed a design that reduces the visual impact of the higher walls.

7. What will the length of the scheme be?

The total defence will be up to 350 meters long from Pleasant Harbour, along Stourport Road up to Millside Court.

8. Will the design allow for the bridge to remain open?

During construction we aim to keep the bridge open at all times.

There may be a one-way system in place whilst we are working near the bridge area.

There may be a reduction in the functional width of the roadway during the deployment of the demountable part of the defences in the case of a flood event.

9. Does the scheme consider climate change?

Yes, we always consider climate change when designing and implementing a scheme.

We follow Environment Agency guidance and add allowances for climate change. Details of this can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/flood-and-coastal-risk-projects-schemes-and-strategies-climate-change-allowances>

10. Have you considered dredging to reduce flood risk?

As part of our initial assessment, we considered multiple options to reduce flood risk to Beales Corner.

Dredging is neither an effective nor affordable long-term solution to the issues of flooding in this area. Below are three reasons why we believe dredging is not a suitable solution:

- In extreme flood events, the small increases in width and depth achieved by dredging a waterway does not provide enough capacity to contain the excess flood water.
- In big rivers, like the Severn, dredging is often ineffective in reducing flood risk, as the natural processes in many rivers can cause silt to build up again quickly. This would require us to continuously dredge the length of the watercourse, which is costly and unsustainable.
- The Environment Agency has a duty to protect valuable river habitats, and dredging has been proven to cause considerable damage to river ecosystems.

11. Will you be able to create a cycle path along the side of the flood defence?

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We have considered this ask from the community as part of our design work. Unfortunately, we will not be able to do so, because of the space required for the defence. However, we have informed the council of the desire for a cycle path to be created in this area.

12. Will there remain access to the river side during no-flood events, particularly for anglers, in your design?

Yes, we have designed the defence in such a way that access to the river side will be maintained during low flows. Access will only be restricted when there is a risk of flooding.

Construction

13. How long will construction take? When will it start and when will it finish?

You will have seen us on the ground carrying out surveys and conducting site visits already. Our presence increased when we started our “enabling works” (preparation work) during the spring of 2023. We aim to start construction during summer 2023. We expect construction to take between 18 months to two years. Things like weather conditions and river levels will influence how long construction will actually take.

We will update the community as we progress, and as timescales become clearer.

14. Will there be disruption to me during the construction works?

Any scheme is likely to provide some level of disruption, such as noise, (partial) road closures and construction traffic.

We will make sure the community is aware of any disruptions in advance and are able to talk to us about their concerns. We always work with contractors who are part of the ‘considerate neighbours’ schemes.

15. During construction, will the scheme impact traffic and transport? And how will you manage this?

During the construction phase, there will be inevitable impacts on transport, and we are liaising with the transport providers to finalise what this will mean for the area. There will be one-way systems in some places and buses will have to divert from their normal routes. We are working closely with local councils and the bus companies to deliver the most appropriate solution.

16. Will Stourport road remain open?

Unfortunately, for health and safety reasons, this will need to be (at least partially) closed for periods during construction and for the utility diversions. We are working with local councils to plan the road closures to minimise disruption to residents and businesses. We will inform the local community prior to us closing the road.

17. Will the bridge remain open during construction?

During construction we aim to keep the bridge open at all times.

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There may be a one-way system in place whilst we are working near the bridge area.

18. How are you going to access the construction area?

It is likely that some footpaths need to be closed during the works. This is mainly for health and safety purposes as large sized construction equipment will be required to build the defences. We will look at all the affected footpaths and determine if alternative routes and diversions will be required.

We always consider the health and safety of our staff and the public when looking at access routes. Where we disrupt access, we will put adequate traffic management systems in place. We aim to minimise the disruption to residents.

19. What will happen with the Severn Trent Pumping Station that's also near the site? Will the Environment Agency work with Severn Trent Water to manage surface water?

Yes, we continue to work closely with Severn Trent and regularly meet with them to discuss the best way forward.

As part of the design work, we are making plans to allow the pumping of surface water by the EA. The current Severn Trent Water (STW) pumps are likely to still be required post construction to manage the sewer network in the local area, however STW are looking at options to improve the system once we have finished our works.

Impact of the scheme

20. Which properties will have reduced risk of flooding because of the scheme?

The scheme focusses on properties north of the River Severn in the 'Beales Corner' area of Bewdley.

21. Will my house be protected against flooding?

The FRMS will be designed to provide a 1 in 100-year Standard of Protection (SoP) (equivalent to a 1% chance of flooding at any given year). This will reduce the risk of flooding to many Beales Corner properties which have been affected in recent year.

22. I live in an area where I am not protected by the defences. Will my flood risk increase?

We have undertaken flood modelling to check if the scheme increases flood risk to other properties.

Where we have identified a negative change in flood risk, we are engaging with the property owners affected to explain the risk and discuss potential additional measures to reduce risk to their property. The scheme will be scrutinised in a flood risk assessment as part of the planning consent

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required from Wyre Forest District Council. It is important to us that we do not significantly move flooding from one place to another.

23. What will be the impact of the scheme be on heritage and conservation?

We are consulting heritage experts to ensure the scheme is in keeping with the heritage of the town. To make sure we meet our planning conditions, the choice of materials are agreed with Wyre Forest District Council.

24. Once the scheme is in place, will there be any impact on traffic and transport?

The Environment Agency aims to keep the bridge open wherever possible, except for short periods of time in order to deploy the barriers during flood events and major incidents.

Once in place, the scheme aims to maintain traffic flow and transport through the town.

25. Will the Flood Risk Management Scheme negatively impact the environment or lead to a reduction in trees?

The Environment Agency has a biodiversity net gain approach to the development of the scheme. This is to ensure any biodiversity loss because of the construction of the scheme is mitigated within the river catchment.

Whilst we have made every effort to limit the loss of trees in the final design of the scheme, it is inevitable that we will need to remove or cut back/prune some trees and vegetation to complete the work, and you will have noticed some vegetation removal which took place in February 2023. Where removing trees cannot be avoided, we plant replacements. For every tree lost because of our work, we plant five more. We also work with residents, local councils, and other groups to identify suitable planting in the local area, and if necessary, opportunities in the wider Bewdley area.

Operation of the scheme

26. How will the scheme operate during a flood event?

Most of the scheme consists of walls. Although they don't look level from the ground, the ground levels change depending on where you are along the riverside, so the walls themselves are level. The height of the defences is consistent to the height of the demountable defences on the Bewdley Town side of the scheme. If the river levels rise, both sides of the river will have an equal level of protection from the river.

Some parts of the schemes will have 'demountables'- defences which can be slotted into place as and when a flood situation arises. These will be kept in a local depot and taken to site when there is increased risk of flooding. They are in keeping with the demountables on the other side of the river and are sturdier than the temporary defences we have used on this location to date.

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Following the completion of the scheme we plan to continue to employ temporary pumps to manage the residual surface water flood risk. How these pumps are used will evolve as we learn about the way that surface water and ground water react when the new flood defence is in place.

27. Once the scheme is built, who will be responsible for the different sections of the flood wall?

The Environment Agency will be responsible for the maintenance and management of the flood wall, including the demountables. The land around the flood walls will remain the responsibility of the relevant landowners.

28. What happens if there is seepage from the barriers? How will you manage this?

The permanent scheme will see a significant reduction in seepage when compared to the temporary barriers. Some level of seepage will still occur and should be expected; however, this seepage is not a concern for the stability of the flood defence. This is a normal occurrence with any flood defence. The Environment Agency will endeavour to use its resources to manage the seepage before property is at risk of flooding, it should however be expected that some degree of standing water will be present at locations behind the defence during times of flood.

29. How will you manage groundwater?

The scheme is unable to reduce ground water levels because the cost would be too high. Basements will flood as they currently do, so the current measures will need to continue to be used. However, with the scheme in place, the current measures may be more effective as the scheme will assist them.

Funding

30. Is there enough funding to complete the scheme?

As with any government funded scheme, we must continue to ensure that the cost does not outweigh the benefits, and there is a constant review of this element of the project.

Inflation and industry wide cost increases have caused most construction material costs to rise by 26% – some, including steel, cement, and bricks, by much more.

Due to inflation, cost increases and temporary works, the scheme has increased to approximately £8 million in cost. This increase has been covered by the Government through the Flood and Coastal Risk Management grant-in-aid (FCRM GIA).

There is also money for risk contingency on top of the funding that we have available should we need it.

Generic Questions

31. Do you undertake maintenance of the watercourses?

Yes, we undertake regular maintenance of the River Severn.

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The responsibility of maintaining a watercourse sits with the riparian landowners. Riparian owners are people who own land next to the river. In most cases, their land stretches to the middle of the river and they will be responsible for that part of the river.

However, we will intervene if there is an increased flood risk to residential properties from a structure or channel, such as a blockage. We will inform the riparian landowner to rectify the defect or carry out the removal ourselves where there is a heightened risk of flooding. For further information on riparian rights and responsibilities, please refer to our 'owning a watercourse' guidance on GOV.UK at the following link <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/owning-a-watercourse>

You can contact our incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60 to report a flood or possible cause of flooding.

32. What is the River Severn Partnership?

The Beales Corner FRMS is one of two water management schemes currently being developed through funding secured by the River Severn Partnership (RSP).

The RSP was chosen by Ministers as one of four pilots and it was allocated funding to assess a range of climate change scenarios and identify the decisions that need to be taken now, and those that may need to be taken in the future, to manage the risk of flooding and coastal change along the length of the River Severn. For further information on the River Severn Partnership, please see the website <http://www.riversevernpartnership.org.uk/>

Temporary barriers

33. What happened when the temporary barriers were breached?

A full investigation report is available online which explains in detail what happened and outlines the measures taken to reduce the risk of breach in the future. Please go to our website and scroll down to the bottom of the page for a link to the review <https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/west-midlands/bealesfrms/>

34. Will temporary barriers be erected during construction?

Once the main construction work has begun, we will not be able to deploy the temporary barriers. We urge residents to be prepared for flooding and use their personal flood resilience measures where possible. We will be in contact with residents to advise them on protecting their properties in the event of a flooding incident.

35. What can I do in flooding events when the temporary barriers are not deployed?

We will use our flood warning system to inform you of the potential for flooding. We will issue the flood Warning for River Severn at Bewdley prior to the onset of flooding. The message will advise that the temporary barriers will not be deployed due to the construction of the Flood Risk Management Scheme.

When you become aware of the potential of flooding you should:

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- move vehicles to higher ground if it's safe to do so
- move family and pets to safety
- move important items upstairs or to a safe place in your property, starting with cherished items and valuables, then furniture and furnishings
- turn off gas, electricity, and water supplies if it's safe to do so; never touch an electrical switch if you're standing in water
- if you have property protection products such as flood barriers, or air brick covers, use them now

Prior to the start of construction please also:

- Make sure your details with our flood warning service are up to date.
- Check your flood plan recognises this change, if you do not have a flood plan consider producing one [How to plan ahead for flooding - Check for flooding - GOV.UK \(check-for-flooding.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-plan-ahead-for-flooding-check-for-flooding-gov-uk)

Future Engagement

36. Will we be kept informed about the scheme?

We are keeping people informed and engaged throughout the length of the scheme.

We do this through our newsletters, which are distributed through our mailing list, public drop-in sessions, door-to-door visits (when necessary), and our online information page, which can be accessed at the following link: <https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/west-midlands/bealesfrms/>

If you would like to receive our newsletter, please email your contact details to BLBFRMS@environment-agency.gov.uk, or call our National Customer Contact Centre on 03708 506 506 during office hours and we will add you to our mailing list.

PLEASE NOTE- By providing us with your contact details you consent to the Environment Agency using the details provided to contact you with updates about the Beales Corner Flood Risk Management Scheme. We will keep your contact details until the project is closed or until you withdraw your consent, whichever is sooner.

You can withdraw your consent to receive these updates at any time by emailing us at BLBFRMS@environment-agency.gov.uk or calling 03708 506 506. We will not share your details with any other third party without your explicit consent unless we are required to by law.

The Environment Agency is the data controller for the personal data you provide. For further information on how we deal with your personal data please see our Personal Information Charter on GOV.UK (search 'Environment Agency personal information charter') or contact our Data Protection team. Address: Data Protection team, Environment Agency, Horizon House, Deanery Road, Bristol, BS1 5AH. Email: dataprotection@environment-agency.gov.uk

37. Can I approach your staff directly on site to discuss the proposed scheme?

To help keep everyone safe we ask that you avoid/minimise your contact with our site staff and contractors as much as possible.

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If you have concerns or queries relating to the scheme, please do not approach our staff and contractors on site. We ask instead that you contact us via email on BLBFRMS@environment-agency.gov.uk or by telephone during office hours on 03708 506 506.

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